

(4)

B U T H R E D:
A
T R A G E D Y.

AS IT IS ACTED AT THE
THEATRE-ROYAL
IN
COVENT-GARDEN.

*Hail, wedded love! mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring! Sole propriety
In Paradise! —————
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets!
Here love his golden shafts employs, here lights
His constant lamp; and waves his purple wings;
Reigns here, and revels: not in the bought smile
Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unendear'd,
Casual fruition! — Nor in court-amours,
Mix'd dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball.*

Proijcit Ampullas, et sesquipedalia Verba.

MILTON,

HOR.

D U B L I N:
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M,DCC,LXXIX.

THEATRE ROYAL
DE LA VILLE

THEATRE ROYAL

CO. E. C. G. R. O. N. E.



CO. E. C. G. R. O. N. E.

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PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. HULL.

WHEN Athens first call'd forth the Scenic art,

To give a living lesson to the heart,
The faithful Muse, on her great task intent,
In Nature's language spoke her sentiment;
Spoke to the soul, which caught the sacred lore,
And learn'd to practise, what it prais'd before.

Fir'd by the thought, th' advent'rer of to-night,
By their example guides his daring flight;
His pictures from the same orig'nal draws,
Nor strays from reason, to seek false applause;
He draws his Britons as in days of old,
When tyrant passion govern'd uncontroll'd;
When right and wrong were measur'd by the
sword,
And the blow often went before the word.

Rough were their manners, but unstain'd with
guile;
Their anger ne'er was hid beneath a smile;
Tho' furious when resisted, soon appeas'd:—
The prostrate foe their gen'rous mercy rais'd.

Such Britons were, and such their sons remain,
While polish'd France succeeds the barb'rous
Dane;

When foil'd in arms, to treach'ry has recourse,
 And 'gainst ourselves inverts our dreaded force.
 Oh! soon may Heav'n th'unnat'ral feud com-
 pose,

Soon turn that force united on our foes!

Pay *gallic perfidy* with tenfold shame,
 And nobly vindicate the British name!

EPI

EPILOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mrs. BULKELT.

OUR Poet is a blockhead, and I'll prove it,

And if you've caught his folly I'll remove it ;

We must be fools indeed, and fools proclaim'd,

If by his notions we are clip'd and tam'd :

Shall we not fly *full feather'd*, round this town,

And in a whirlwind hunt each pleasure down ?

Our preaching Poet in this night's discourse,

Has shewn a wife attack'd, and no divorce !

She scorn'd a King forsooth, who swore to deck
her

With gems, would drain his Treas'ry and Ex-
chequer ;

But no——she lov'd her husband——vulgar
creature,

And chose with him retirement.——Is that na-
ture ?

Such strange ideas, if not quash'd, are ruin,

And will *undo*, what fashion has been *doing* !

But shall a whining bard give up our right ?

Stand by me, Gods ! the scribbl'ing tribe I'll
fight ;

Fight on this theme, till my tongue cease to wag,
 And ne'er, thank nature, was it known to flag.
 Had he but studied life, and got some breeding,
 He then had known *Bon Ton*, worth all his read-
 ing.

More nobly now each fair her time employs,
 Than scolding maids, or rearing girls and boys !
 For hardy camps, we quit the lazy town,
 And if we like our soldiers, straw is down :
 Dress'd cap—a—pee, we strut *en militaire*,
 And make France tremble at our martial air !
 One warlike maid forc'd Englishmen to yield,
 Fear no invaders while we keep the field !
 But, Madam, cried the bard,—Wisdom declares
 Women are form'd for soft, domestic cares ;
 And when they march in camps, and prate of
 sieges,

Horrendum est ! et contra, naturæ leges ?

Your Latin words, learn'd Sir, are shot at ran-
 dom ;

For this plain reason, I don't understand 'em—
 Did Heav'n to men alone for pow'r give brains,
 Let 'em rule better, or resign the reins ;
 Let us but try our skill, and if poor we
 Should likewise fail, more pleasant sure 'twill
 be

To have in blund'ring some variety.

But jest apart, our Poet, not unwise,
 Points out true objects to the brightest eyes.
 Daughter's of fashion, let not heedless youth
 Force you to fly from *Nature, Prudence, Truth* :
 How sweet so e'er the joy-wing'd moments
 glide,

Be not to those three visitors deny'd

And

EPILOGUE

vii

And tho' from cares domestic you may roam,
Still think some pleasures may be found at
home.

Smile not—Fashion will make this plan her
own,

For, tho' you scorn it, when by Bards made
known,
You'll feel its pow'r adopted on the Throne.



Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

- Osbrichte*, (King of Northumberland.) Mr. Aicken.
- Buthred*. { A British Earl; Gene- } Mr. Wroughton.
 { ral of his Forces. }
- Elwin*. { A young Lord, favourite } Mr. Farren.
 { to Osbrichte. }
- Morcar*. { Captain of Osbrichte's } Mr. Clarke.
 { Guards. }
- Elbert*. (An Officer under *Buthred*.) Mr. Piele.
- Randolph*. { An Officer of Os- }
 { brichte's Guards. }
- Esrick*. (A Page attending *Osbrichte*.)
- Iwar*. (King of the Danes.) Mr. L'Estrange.

W O M E N.

- Rena*. (Wife to *Buthred*.) Mrs. Hartley.
- Ela*. (Her Companion.) Miss Platt.

Attendants, Soldiers British, Danes, &c. &c.

SCENE, *Buthred's Castle in Yorkshire.*

BUTH-



BUTHRED:

TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE, *the Hall of Buthred's Castle.*

Buthred,—Elbert.

BUTHRED, (*with letters in his hand.*)

ELBERT, these letters from Earl Edgar, say,
 Those foes of treason, unreclaim'd by mercy,
 Unaw'd by vengeance, are again in arms;
 Impatient for their new allies, the Danes;
 And that a fleet of those fierce ravagers
 Hangs hov'ring on the coast — They must not join!
 The rebels must be quell'd, before the Dane
 Can land his powers. —

E L B E R T.

This will be pleasing news,
 To those young, haughty, valiant-looking lords,
 Who flutter round the King: and o'er their wine
 Fight battles in the air, and conquer worlds.

A 5

BUTH-

B U T H R E D.

They may fight bravely in the field too, Elbert?
 That petulance of youth, and pride of blood
 Often impel to noblest feats of valour.
 But for these hardy rebels—should the King
 Know of this mad, base insult on his mercy,
 His wrath, his courage could not be restrain'd.
 And much I fear, his presence would inflame
 Their fury to despair!—His late excesses
 Still rankle in their hearts—

E L B E R T.

Can Buthred see?

Will he admit a blemish in his idol?—
 How blind has friendship kept you to his vices!

B U T H R E D.

Yes, Elbert, my soul loves him, dearly loves
 him;

The brother of my youth, in arts, and arms.
 How oft have we awoke the ling'ring morn
 With sportive music o'er the dewy lawns,
 Tracing the tainted footsteps of the stag,
 And in th' enchanting ardour of the chase
 Climb'd the steep cliff, or stemm'd the rapid flood!
 Together have we pierc'd th' embattl'd rank,
 And seal'd the crowded rampart, hand in hand.
 Our hopes, our wishes, every grief and joy,
 Flow'd from one source—our hearts knew no dis-
 tinction

E L B E R T.

You should fulfil the duty of such friendship.
 Claim its true right; and boldly speak his faults.

B U T H R E D.

'Tis my fix'd purpose; and I long have sought
 An apt occasion; for advice obtruded
 Without respect to time and circumstance,
 Loses its weight, and only gives offence.
 But he has perceiv'd my view, and still eludes it.

E L

E L B E R T.

Then you have lost his favour. Conscience guilt
Dreads virtue's piercing eye, and shuns its lustre.
Elwin has robb'd you of his confidence!
That supple, treacherous, fawning sycophant!
That shadow of a smile!—

B U T H R E D.

Yes!—Ev'ry blot
That stains the name of Osbrighte, flows from him.
I lately check'd him in his mad career,
Read the black catalogue of all his vices.
And warn'd him of the consequence.

E L B E R T.

'Tis done!—
I fear'd 'twas so!—You've seal'd your own disgrace.
'Twere safer take the matter by the beard,
Than hurt the fav'rite's heel—

B U T H R E D.

Can Elbert think
I fear disgrace? that Osbrighte can descend
To hear a hint, a whisper breath'd against me?
With all his follies, he's not fall'n so low.
He still loves virtue.—Morcar shares his favour.
The brave, experienc'd, honest soldier, Morcar.

E L B E R T.

Honest yourself, you think that no man wears
A studied face.—But honesty too oft,
In self-complacence looking up to heav'n,
Falls in the pit by fraud or envy dug,
If timely caution bend not down her eye,
And guide the unwary step.—I hope he's honest;
Though his avow'd attachment to that Elwin
Alarms a doubt.—But what can Morcar do?
You, only you, whom heav'n has bless'd with pow'r,
Can save your country; and her eyes are on you.

B U T H R E D.

Soon as this rising is suppress'd—[and soon,
'I hope, our vig'rous measures will defeat.

The

The loose, unsteady councils of rebellion]
 Yet reeking from the field, I'll haste to Osbrighte,
 And in the merit of this recent service
 With honest freedom shew him to himself.
 Friendship shall hold the mirror.—If he start,
 Shock'd at the black resemblance, he may
 change!—

If not! my heart shall own his love no more.

Retir'd from all the cares of camps and courts,
 I'll seek true happiness in private life.

E L B E R T.

Retir'd from camps and courts!—Retire from
 Osbrighte's,

And fix your own.—The virtues, which so long
 Have propp'd a throne, that shakes beneath his
 vices,

Exerted for yourself, will raise an empire
 Firm as the basis of our British world,
 And spread its arms like ocean, all around it.
 Who in this warlike age would damp the fire
 Of great ambition!—Who not urge it on,
 To tear the faded chaplet from the brow
 Of laurel'd indolence, that never strove
 By glory to renew, by virtue earn it;
 But in the lazy pride of ancestry

Sleeps under with'ring honours!—See those Danes!
 How often foil'd, how bravely still aspiring!
 Where fame and empire are the prize in view,
 The glory of th' attempt enables ruin.

B U T H R E D.

No, Elbert, no!—I never can attempt
 The throne of Osbrighte, tho' the world beside
 Should rise in arms against him!—But no more,
 No more of this!—(Trumpet.)—That trum-
 pet speaks our men

In readiness.—I've order'd all to horse.

While you prepare, I'll fly for one short moment,

To

A TRAGEDY.

To Rena's arms, and with the voice of love
Soften the pang of parting.

(Exit Buthred.)

SCENE, A Garden.

Rena—Ela.

R E N A. *with a chaplet.*

Ela! the wild luxuriance of these flowers
Upbraids our slacken'd care.—My Lord will smile,
To see our boasted work in this disorder.

E L A.

Pleas'd with the cause, the fight will give him pleasure.
His love alone engrosses all your thoughts.

R E N A.

It does——Nor never shall another care—
Another wish intrude into my heart.
But see! he comes—the Lord of all my hopes—
He comes!—my Buthred comes—and I am
happy——

(Buthred enters while she says this—

B U T H R E D. *embracing.*)

How I could gaze for ever on that face!
Whose ev'ry beauty, tho' the pride of nature,
Receives its brightest lustre from the mind
That shines divinely through!

R E N A.

Alas my Lord!

Such praise from you, may make your Rena vain,
Behold the simpler tribute of my love!

B U T H R E D.

I greet th' auspicious omen——Victory
Will ne'er resume the gift of such a hand,
And snatch it from my brow.

RENA

14 B U T H R E D :

R E N A .

What victory ?

O my presaging fears !—what victory ?—
Did you not promise we should part no more ?

B U T H R E D .

No ! —Never will we part, fair excellence,
To wait a tedious absence !—But, when glory,
The service of my Prince, my country's welfare
Call me as now : we soon will meet again,
In ecstacy, exalted by the pause.

R E N A .

O Butfred, Butfred ! dost thou love like Rena !
Were thy breast warm'd with half the fire, that
melts
My sick'ning heart, thou could'st not leave me thus,
At ev'ry shadow, ev'ry sound of glory.

B U T H R E D .

Think not my Rena, I can ever leave thee !
My life dwells with thee.—Where'er I go,
Thine image lives within my faithful heart.

R E N A .

I wrong thee not !—My willing soul's con-
vinced,

That Butfred is all love ; all sacred truth,
And brightest constancy !—fond, foolish heart !—
Why should'st thou think, tho' love warms all thy
wishes,

Points ev'ry fear, and sweetens ev'ry hope,
My Lord should change the purpose of his life,
Unbend his mind, and leave the paths of glory ?—
No !—My reluctant, conquer'd soul reverses
The sacred call, and yields you to its impulse.
But tho' my tongue consents, my wishful eye
More faithful to my heart, shall follow you :
And when no longer blest with the dear object,
A love-drawn tear shall shut out every other.

B U T H R E D .

Soon shall the beams of joy dispel those tears.

Spark-

A T R A G E D Y. 15

Sparkling with double radiance to receive,
To bless your happy Buthred.—Heav'nly pow'rs!
Guardians of innocence, protect my love! —————

R E N A

Oh, my lov'd lord! ——— And wilt thou soon re-
turn? ———

Is there no danger? ——— O my trembl'ing heart! ———

B U T H R E D. *(giving her the chaplet.)*

Before this chaplet withers, I'll return,
And claim it at thine hand—my love! ———

R E N A

My Buthred ———

(They embrace, then exit Buthred.)

R E N A. *(looking wistfully after him.)*

He's gone! ——— And with him ev'ry sense of
joy ———

(weeping—)

E L A

What various passions struggle in the breast,
Where love has fix'd his throne! Hope, fear, and
grief,

And joy o'erpaying all! When Buthred comes,
One look of his shall brighten all this gloom.

R E N A

Love! — O how poorly does that word express
Th' emotions of my soul? — Each tender tie
Of nature, friendship, sister's, daughter's love,
With something more, that comprehends them all —
Something above them all — above a name,
Binds me to Buthred, happy did not fear
Damp every joy, by whispering to my soul,
They're too sublime, too exquisite to last

E L A

He must be safe! Heav'n guards the paths of
virtue,
Our timid sex oft shudders at the work

OF

16 B U T H R E D :

Of frightened fancy, trembling to look forward ;
Where bolder man walks thro' secure ; nor sees
The phantoms fading in the eye of courage.
Fear starts at its own shadow, where the soul's
Softened by love ; and every anxious sense
Alarm'd——

R E N A.

Oh how can I but love him, Ela ?
How does he stoop to teach my tim'rous mind
To follow wisdom, thro' the devious maze
Of blinded prejudice, and raise my eye
To look at truth ; at every blissful pause,
While charm'd attention lies absorb'd in rapture
Sweet'ning instruction with some mark of love !——
His eye, whose flash appalls the startled foe,
Melts into tender languishing with me.
His voice, that thunders terror thro' the field,
Attun'd to love, speaks music to my ear——
Musick, whose sounds shall dwell for ever on it.
But hark ! (*Trumpet*) That trumpet tells of some
arrival.——
Perhaps 'tis he ! I'll fly in hope to meet him.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE before the Castle.

Elwin, Randolph.

E L W I N.

Haste, Randolph !—Mark what way Earl Buthred
holds!

His troop so rapidly pour'd down the hill,
My eye scarce caught their shadow, ere the brow
Hid them from sight—— [*Exit Randolph*]
He seem'd to point to th' Eastward.
If he pursues that course, he cannot meet
His royal guest—the summit of my wishes !——
Fortune, thou Goddess of great enterprize,
Smile on my hopes !—If Buthred should be absent,
Osbrighte,

A TRAGEDY. 17

Osbright, already led by the report
Of Rena's beauty, may with ease be led
To make some overtures of lawless love!—
That stabs the peace of Buthred, and repays
His insolence for daring to reprove me;
And in th' event, may lead to higher hopes.

Enter Randolph from the Castle.

Speak, Randolph, is Earl Buthred to return?

R A N D O L P H

The Warders tell, that at Lord Edgar's summons,
He led his forces instantly to Deira—

E L W I N

To Deira, say'st thou?—That's beyond my hopes!—
But hark—(*trumpets*)—The King—I must announce
his coming.

Exit Elwin, &c.—At the same time

Enter Osbright, Morcar, and Attendants.

O S B R I G H T E

From yonder hill, how richly shine these plains,
Clad in the pride of harvest—and the people—
Plenty, content, and heart-felt ease enliven
The smile of happiness on every face.

M O R C A R

Not far from hence, my Liege, where beauteous
Humber

Winds smiling thro' the fertile vales of Deira,
There hangs a cliff, whose venerable brow
Shaded with oaks so very old, they seem
Almost coeval, with the rocks they cover,
Sloops o'er the silver stream, whose lucid bosom
Reflects the vary'd landscape—Here a Stag,
Lord of the lawns, without a rival reigns:
I've seen him spring, at the first swelling note
The horn has pour'd along the vale; and looking
A moment round with scorn upon his foes,
His ears erect, his nostrils flashing fire,

Bound.

Bound forward with the wind, and mock pursuit.
 And, oft again, at ev'n have I beheld him,
 Trot proudly up the cooling stream: now taste it;
 Now pluck the brouze, that dangled o'er the banks;
 And seek untterrify'd his wonted home,
 Fresh, strong, and sportful; while the baffled hounds,
 Weary and weak, hung many a mile behind,
 And dropping here and there, gave up the chase.

OSBRICHT.

Mine may be more successful; and to-morrow
 We'll see this stag unharbour'd.—I have long
 Promis'd to come; and for some happy days
 Pursue the pleasures of the chase with Buthred.

Enter Elwin from the Castle.

E L W I N.

My Liege, Earl Buthred is from home. But
 Rena,

His gentle consort, opens wide the gate,
 With duteous welcome to receive her Sov'reign.

OSBRICHT.

The voice of fame reports her passing fair.

E L W I N.

Fair did you say?—Such absolute perfection
 Of shape and feature is above a name.

The most exalted flights of love-sick fancy
 Ne'er soar'd so high—Behold and own her beauty.

Enter Rena, Ela and Attendants.

OSBRICHT. [*gazing on Rena.*]

Beauty!—She comes!—The Queen of Beauty
 comes!

Led by the Graces—(*half aside.*)

R E N A. [*bending the knee.*]

Health to Royal Osbriht!

Will my Liege deign to take the humble welcome
 A widow'd house affords?—And you my Lords—
 Were Buthred here, his care would make it better.

A TRAGEDY 39

O S B R I G H T E. [*after a long pause.*]

Where thou art present nothing can be wanted;
To please your guests; or grace their entertainment.

R E N A

Alas!—your Highness thinks with too much
favour.

Frugal's the fare, and rude the entertainment

A British house affords, whose Lord is absent.

No chearful dance collects the sprightly youth—

No music echoes thro' the lonely hall:

The love-torn ditty, whose grave, plaintive strains

Beguile the hours of female industry,

Is all the mirth, the matron deigns to share.

O S B R I G H T E.

Happy the husband, whose remembrance fills

So fair a breast as Rena's,—Did Earl Ruthred

Say when he would return?—

R E N A.

My anxious hopes

Expect him here, this evening.

O S B R I G H T E.

Come my Lords!

We'll hold possession for him in his absence.

(*They all enter the Castle but Elwin.*)

E L W I N.

'Tis so!—By Heav'n 'tis so!—He takes the bait—

His eyes drink poison at each burning glance.

Nature assist,—Kind beauty show your power

This once, and I'm your advocate for ever.

(*He follows into the Castle.*)

End of the FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

S C E N E, *The Hall.*

Osbrighte—Elwin.

O S B R I G H T E.

D I D ever nature form a face so fair,
So meaning yet so modest!—How her eyes
Spoke in each look, she darted thro' my heart.

E L W I N.

I shall henceforth be own'd a judge of beauty.

O S B R I G H T E.

Beauty?—The word's too weak to paint her
charms,

Or let it never be prophan'd elsewhere——

That I were Buthred! and his Rena mine!

Empire and glory I'd exchange with pleasure.

E L W I N.

Yet even beauty may be bought too dear,
And Rena gain'd on easier terms.

O S B R I G H T E.

Oh, name them!——

But whither would my blinded passion run?

Passion?—despair.—Is she not Buthred's wife?

E L W I N.

Enamour'd of the beauties of Alcmena,
Jove seiz'd the moment of Amphytrion's absence;
Assum'd his likeness, rush'd into her arms,
And rioted on love, three happy days,
While Phœbus archly wink'd, coy Cynthia wrapp'd
In her black mantle's skirt her bashful face,
And drowsy Morpheus seal'd each prying eye.

O S B R I G H T E.

Your mirth's ill tim'd.—You trifle with my pain.

ELWIN

A T R A G E D Y. 21

E L W I N.

Dare to be Jovè!—And Rena's your Alcmena.—
Your power is here, as great as his was there.
To seize your wîth, and bury all in silence.

O S B R I C H T E.

O thought of horror! seize the wife of Buthred!
The right hand of my strength, my firmest friend!—

E L W I N.

Yet Heav'n approv'd, and blest'd with great Al-
cides,
First fav'rite of fame, his daring love.
Nor scrupl'd wife Antiquity to hail him,
Father and King of all their fabled Gods.
Love's an excuse for all things!—Rena's beauty—

O S B R I C H T E.

O name it not!—Would I had never seen her!—
My soul's on fire!—Yet, while I can, I'll fly—

E L W I N.

And leave the fair to mourn her disappointment?—

O S B R I C H T E.

Her disappointment!—How?—

E L W I N.

She kindly bade you,
To the best welcome of a widow'd house;
And where is that, but in the widow's arms?—
The blushing cheek, the throbbing of her breast
Spoke her heart's flame, that flash'd so from her eye,
Desire look'd dazzled down! 'Twould sooner warm
Old age to youth, than all Medea's charms.

O S B R I C H T E.

But to wrong Buthred!—Enter as a friend;
And basely steal the jewel of his soul.

E L W I N.

And who is Buthred that you thus respect him?
Would Buthred pause to seize his vassals wife,
Rise her charms, then send her slightly back?
And dare the wretch e'en groan a discontent?—

Earl

Earl Buthred better knows th' extent of pow'r !
 And shall his Sovereign not exert a right
 That's paramount to his? — This breaks the chain,
 Which keeps the world in order. Pow'r descends
 From Heav'n, and cannot have its course inverted.
 A King can do no wrong — His power's a sanction
 For all he does. Is Heav'n accountable
 For storms or thunder? — Are its delegates
 Bound by the laws, their arbitrary will
 Prescribes to their inferiors? — 'Twere absurd!
 'Twere a base mockery of pow'r to think so! —
 By Heav'n I'd sooner be a shepherd's dog,
 And guard the flock I dar'd not hope to taste,
 Than bear the pageantry of Sov'reignty,
 On such vile terms. — Well, doth Earl Buthred know,
 Your pleasure is his law, and bounds his right.

O S B R I C H T E. *(After a long pause.)*

It may be so! — But he has ever stood
 So fair in my esteem, so near my heart. —

E L W I N.

Then leave him Rena! — Leave her matchless
 beauties

To feast his sense; and in the pause of joy,
 While she relates this triumph of your virtue,
 He'll gaze upon her; and deride your scruples.

O S B R I C H T E. *(passionately.)*

Distraction! — Elwin, whither wouldst thou
 lead me?

E L W I N.

My zeal to serve you may have been too forward.
 I saw you with, and pointed to the way.
 But I have been too ready, too officious.

O S B R I C H T E.

O speak! — Say any thing! But all's in vain.

E L W I N.

Then see! and seize your happiness at once.
 Rena, meet woman, never will refuse you.

The

The sex is vanity.---Their ready love
Scarce waits a Prince's asking.---Force a sigh;
For once assume a pensive, love-sick air;
Till pity, gentle pity, waken love.

O S B R I C H T E.

It shall be so!--Yes; Rena shall be mine.---
Be mine.---Extatick thought!--Her yielding beauties
Shall crown my joy, exalted by the stealth;
Whose pause, and mystery will still preserve
The sweets of novelty; and fire the breast;
The unsated breast with ever-new desires.

(Exit Osbrighte.)

E L W I N.

He goes!--Assist, kind fortune, his attempt!
My fate and Buthred's now are in the balance.

(Exit.)

SCENE, *The Garden.*

Rena,--Ela.

E L A.

Why hangs that pensive cloud upon thy brow?
Why dost thou shun thy royal guest, who waits
A smile of pleasure to enhance his welcome.

R E N A.

Languid the smile, and faint the flash of joy,
That feebly strives to glimmer thro' distress.
I know not whence, but something is not right.
Something sits heavy on my boding soul.
This farce of state o'erwhelms me---My full heart
Sickens at the fullsome flattery, that daubs
Each studied word; and tinsels all their smiles.

E L A.

See how yon lilly droops, without a prop!--

R E N A.

Sad emblem of my fate!--So droops my heart
When Buthred is away--But soft!--the King.

Enter

54 B U I T H R E D :

Enter Osbrighte.

O S B R I G H T E,

Thus Eve in majesty of native beauty
Tended the flowers of Paradise, which gain'd
A glow of double brightness from her hand.

R E N A.

The heav'n-born majesty of innocence
Shone then unfulfill'd; and diffus'd a grace
O'er all her works;

O S B R I G H T E. [*aside.*]

And shines resistless still,
Dazz'ling the down-cast eye of conscious guilt.
Had Eve been awful, amiable as she,
Man had escap'd; Satan had never dar'd—

R E N A.

You seem disorder'd, Sir; the chilling air
After the morn's fatigue—

O S B R I G H T E. [*in disorder.*]

No!—nothing, nothing—
She's a woman!—frail, weak woman!—And
such beauty— [*Aside.*]

R E N A.

I fear, I but intrude upon your thoughts.

O S B R I G H T E.

By heav'n, the smiles encouragement—(*aside.*)—
My thoughts!

O Rena, all my thoughts are fix'd on you.

R E N A.

On me!—I hope a worthier object fills—

O S B R I G H T E.

Search all the works of nature—shew me one,
So fair, so rich in every excellence.

R E N A.

My Liege!—(*going.*)

OSBRIGHT. [*catching her hand.*]

—Stay!—Whither would my fairest go?—
You must not!—shall not leave me!

R E N A.

Sire, I must!—

I cannot, will not stay.

OSBRIGHT.

One moment hear me!—

Hear me pour out the fulness of my heart,
That lives but in your smiles; that knows no hope
Of happiness, but what your love must give.

R E N A.

Good heav'n!—unhand me, Sir. You must forget
Who, what I am—the daughter of Earl Seivard,
The wife of Buthred.—

OSBRIGHT.

Fairest of creation,

Why so alarm'd? You can't dread violence.
Tho' fir'd to madness, by the heav'n before me,
My soul disclaims so black a thought. These eyes
Melting in rapture speak a softer language;
And plead for willing love.

R E N A. [*in great agitation.*]

Must I hear this?

O Buthred, Buthred, why art thou away?

OSBRIGHT.

Hear me a moment!—gentle Rena, hear me!
Could nature, so benign in all her works,
Exert peculiar care in forming one,
To make one happy, wretched all beside?
Her blessings are diffusive, general
Their use; and all, but man enjoy them so:
But man, whose blind caprice confines the bliss,
Heav'n meant by generous freedom to enhance—

R E N A.

O, hear him, heav'n!—Support me, El—Oh—

(*faints.*)

B

E L A.

E L A

Osbrighte!---my liege,---for love of heav'n retire---

O S B R I G H T E.

Wretch that I was, to harbour such a thought!
 But O fair saint, if my unhallow'd lips
 E'er form a sound offensive, e'er profane,
 Thy purity, call down the wrath of Heav'n
 On this devoted head!--And Heav'n will hear
 Thy sacred voice, and vindicate thy cause.

*Exit Osbrighte*R E N A. [*re-entering.*]

O Buthred! Ela!--O where am I, Ela?--
 Insolent monster;--O my bursting heart.--

E L A.

He's gone; and if repentance can atone,
 His crime will be forgiv'n--I doubt your fear
 Took in a sense too serious the loose words
 Of levity, and fulsome compliment,
 Which men miscale a tribute due to beauty.
 Shock'd at th' effect, he went in agony
 Not to be told; and ere he went, he swore,
 Devoutly swore, that never e'en in thought--

R E N A.

Nor shall he!--Swear!--His words, his oaths
 are all
 False as his heart, and meant but to deceive.
 But never shall his hated voice again
 Pollute my soul!--I'll never see him more.

*(Exeunt.)*S C E N E, *The Hall.*

Osbrighte--Morcar.

O S B R I G H T E.

Send Elwin to me!--Quickly sound to horse!
 I'll hence this hour--

(Exit Morcar.)

My

A T R A G E D Y. 27

My safety is in flight.

All human wisdom, fortitude, and virtue,
Fade in the dazzling radiance of such beauty.
Distraction!—Can I have her?—Dare I stay?
The choice is fate!—I cannot think—What
phrenzies

War in my brain, and tear my tortur'd soul!—
To conquer nature, to resign the reins
Of struggling passion to the hand of reason,
Is the great proof of man—ev'n th' attempt
Will summon ev'ry virtue to my aid.

Enter Elwin.

Have you seen Morcar?—Is my train drawn out?
This moment I'll away—

E L W I N.

Away, my Liege?—

Rena, I thought, had charms to keep you longer.

O S B R I G H T E.

Stop thy base tongue!—'Tis blasphemy!—She's
virtue.

And I am?—But away—-I dare not think.——

E L W I N.

She has refus'd you then!—and talk'd of virtue,
Forc'd a feign'd tear, a sob or two—and heav'd
Her breast, that pants in secret with desire.
All woman, woman! are you so deceived?

O S B R I G H T E.

Licentious railing!—Woman?—No. She's more,
Her soul is virtue; her all-beauteous form
It's consecrated fane.

E L W I N.

The dang'rous sex,
Stranger to truth, is all one contradiction.
Perverse by nature, woman seems displeas'd
With what she wishes most.—Their studied words

B 2

Bear

Bear no more likeness to their thoughts, than fire
To coldest flint.—They're all deceit and pride.

O S B R I G H T E

Her pride is virtue. She's above deceit.
I saw, while urging ev'ry pow'r of love,
I watch'd her eye, and trac'd each secret thought,
I saw disdain, aversion, rage, and horror,
Change ev'ry feature, blot her faded cheek,
And tear her tender frame, till nature fail'd
And she sunk lifeless into Ela's arms.—

E L W I N.

And then her lover bashfully withdrew.—
Faint!—Can I trust my senses?—Why, my Liege,
I met her now returning from the garden;
Her face all flush'd; her eyes with fierce desire
Sparkling and wild—smiles dimpled all her cheek.

O S B R I G H T E.

In smiles? Impossible. You cannot mean so.

E L W I N.

Kill me, this moment, ere you doubt my truth.
I met her glowing, trembling with desire;
And laughing loud, I thought with eager joy;
But 'twas thy timid love provok'd her scorn,
And blunt its pow'r's.—One only they pretend to;
And on the same of that, howe'er ill-founded,
Assume a right to ev'ry vice they please.

O S B R I G H T E.

Perfidious creature!—There can be no truth,
No virtue in their kind, since Rena's false.

E L W I N.

Virtue in woman?—They were made to marr it;
Poison its principles, pervert its aim.—

Enter a Page, (who speaks aside to Elwin.)

O S B R I G H T E.

Is't possible?—To laugh at my respect?—
Insulting hypocrite!—but I may yet—

(Exit Page.)
E L W I N.

T R A G E D Y.

29

E L W I N.

Esrick my liege, this moment in his waiting,
Heard Ela order horses and attendants !
With the most earnest secrecy and haste.

O S B R I G H T E.

What can this mean ?

E L W I N.

It means that virtuous Rena,
Elate with pride, and stung by disappointment,
Will fly to Buthred, with a well feign'd tale,
Work'd up with sighs and tears, to magnify
Her love and virtue ; and revenge your coolness ;
'Till in a flame she blazons her renown ;
And wraps your realms in blood and devastation.

O S B R I G H T E.

Furies ? — What must be done ? —

E L W I N.

She must not go —
And you must charm her ; force her to be secret.
Nothing wins woman like a little force :
It saves compliance, saves appearances,
And keeps a show of virtue for occasion.
How will she hide her blushes in your bosom ;
Murmur a soft complaint, confess her love,
And make you swear, you never will desert her ?

O S B R I G H T E.

It shall be so ! — This instant ! —

E L W I N.

Wait, my liege,
'Till every eye is clos'd ; 'till faithful night
Draws her kind veil ; and silence watches for you.
Rena's design of flight must be prevented ;
And Morcar know you stay ; to see the men
Dispos'd to rest ; that no intruding eye
Profane your joy : for nought should wake but love.

B 3.

(Exit Elwin.)

O S B R I G H T E.

Come, friendly darkness! hide my guilty joy!—
 Can darkness hide such guilt?—'tis guilt no longer.
 Necessity now sanctifies th' attempt,
 And what before was love, is now but prudence.

Enter Elwin.

E L W I N.

All's done!—and Cupid panting with impatience,
 Waits to conduct you!—See from yonder hill,
 Whose brow, curled round with clouds, nods o'er
 the plain;

Kind night comes muffled in a drowsy mist,
 With opportunity, best friend to love,
 Smiling beneath her wing, and beck'ning to you.
 Retire a moment, to prevent all fear
 Of your design! There give a loose to fancy!
 Paint ev'ry charm that can exalt delight,
 Then in the transport rush into her arms;
 And satiate ev'ry sense with love and beauty.

(Exeunt.)

End of the SECOND ACT.

A T R A G E D Y. 31

A C T III.

SCENE, *The Hall.*

Elwin—Morcar.

E L W I N.

'T WAS madness!—Treason of the blackest hue
Treason against his pleasure; which a prince
Can never pardon.—All your hopes are ruin'd—

M O R C A R.

Perish the hopes, that flow from other source,
Or want support but honour.—I disclaim them—
Just Heav'n! Is sacred hospitality—
Are friendship, gratitude for noblest service;
No longer ties on man's licentious will?

E L W I N.

Words! empty words!—When clashing with a
will,

Of pow'r sufficient to support the breach.
Priests may preach virtue; and its laws restrain
The weak or tim'rous.—Is the lordly eagle
Stop'd by the web that's spread to catch a fly?—

M O R C A R.

Had she consented, that were some excuse,
Some slight extenuation of the crime.
But 'midst such cries as almost tempt to think
That Heav'n was deaf, to offer violence!—
'Twas horrible.—My soul revolted at it.—
Nor do I fear the consequence.—His wrath
Will soon subside; and in a cooler moment,
He'll thank the honest zeal, that step'd between
His soul, and such petition.—

E L W I N.

Groundless hope!—
His rage was only smother'd for the moment,

To burst with double violence.---I read
His soul, when hurrying from the guilty scene,
Furious, and gloomy ; as the felon wolf
Slinks growling from the rescu'd fold---He comes---
Retire, a moment, till each soothing art,
That friendship can inspire, appease his rage---

(Exit Morcar.)

Do you too moralize?---Presume to scan
What's done above you?---You may chance to rue
Th' officious virtue, which is now your pride.
A statesman's friend is but his instrument,
Who should not hear, nor see more than he's order'd.
I'd give him to his fate!--But he's attach'd,
Firmly attach'd to me, by gratitude,
And the same notions of romantic honour
Which made him interfere so madly here,
Insure his faith; and in my present schemes,
His aid may be of service---Soft, the King-----

Enter Osbrikte.

O S B R I G H T E. (*not seeing Elwin.*)

Would I had never seen her!--Such an outrage
Has stain'd my fame for ever---My friend's wife!--
And here, beneath this hospitable roof
To act the mid-night ruffian, basely steal
On sleeping innocence!--'Twas horrible!--
Faith, honour, nature shudder at the thought---
Is it not possible to charm her silence?---
To gild th' affront?---The affront!--'Tis all my
own-----

Th' attempt; and the repulse alike reflect
Disgrace on me, while she gains nought but honour---
Elwin! (*seeing him.*) thy fatal councils have undone
me-----

Blasted my honour, poison'd my soul's peace---

E L W I N.

My councils, Sir!--'Twas Morcar's rash intrusion!--

Ta

A T R A G E D Y

33

Th' attempt, and not the deed, is dang'rous.
That, if accomplish'd, had seal'd all in safety.

O S B R I G H T E.

No!--My chill'd heart recoil'd at a resistance
So unexpected; and so full of horror;
And caught with gladness at the kind prevention:--
But speak, what must be done?--*(trumpet.)*

Hark--whence that sound?--

(Exit Elwin.)

Heaven's vengeance may send Buthred!--Dare I see
him?

See!--meet my friend!--My friend!--I have no
friend.

Friendship is virtue, and disdain my claim.

Guilt, shame, and fear, which hang the gloomy head.

And shake the heart, for courage flies with virtue--

Are mine--would fly--would hide me from myself--

O that I could for ever--Furies! Elbert--

Enter Elbert and Elwin.

E L B E R T. *(bending the knee.)*

So may the foes of Osbrighte ever fall,
With blasted hopes as yester evening saw
Sigard by Buthred's hand.--

O S B R I G H T E. *(starting.)*

By Buthred's hand?

E L B E R T.

A courier from Ead Edgar, in the morn,
Brought word, that Rebel was again in arms,
Stronger than ever; and a Danish fleet
Upon the coast--Buthred, who knew how dang'rous
Their joining, arm'd his men, and instantly
March'd off to quell them. Just at ev'n we met,
On Southwold downs; for flush'd with daring hope,
To have surpriz'd you in your capital,
They had advanc'd so far, without resistance.
Both armies halted. Buthred offer'd pardon,
Except t' a few!--They glorying in their numbers,

(For they o'ertold us many times;)—all Mercia
 Rose like a whirlwind in a frantick rage
 Hail'd Buthred King; and bade him lead them on
 To vict'ry and revenge—Your danger fir'd
 His loyal breast;—He answer'd with a blow
 That cleft the foremost rebel to the teeth.
 The fight was short, but bloody. Buthred soon
 Singling out Sigard, after brave resistance,
 Ended his impious treasons with his life.
 Astonish'd all threw down their arms, and fled.
 Buthred forbade pursuit. He knew the sword
 Was in his hand to punish, not destroy;
 So held the lifted hand of angry justice,
 And spar'd a blow that would have crush'd a people.

OSBRIGHT, *[troubled]*

Be still my heart!—*(aside)*—When did the fight
 begin?—

E L B E R T.

At early ev'n, and ended as 'twas dark.

OSBRIGHT, *[in great agitation]*

The very instant.—Had this solid earth
 Gap'd from its entrails but a moment sooner,
 And swallow'd me alive, my lot were happy—*(aside)*
 The fleet, the Danes!—Did they attempt to land?

E L B E R T.

They did;—and following at the rebels heels,
 Came just as all was ended.—Buthred us'd
 The favour of the night to hide his weakness,
 And made a truce.—Then, like the sacred dove,
 With Heav'n's most fav'rite tidings in his mouth,
 Flew with the olive branch to crown his Sov'reign,
 To York;—and sent me here to bless his Rea—

OSBRIGHT.

I must prevent this meeting!—*(aside)*—Elbert
 stay!—

Ourselves will be the messenger of joy!—
 Elwin *(aside)* detain him here till my return.

(Exit Osbright.)

ELWIN.

A TRAGEDY.

E L W I N:

Successful, happy Buthred!—Fortune ever
Waits on his steps! and Victory weaves her wreaths
To crown her favourite—

E L B E R T.

Such distinguish'd merit
Commands success.—'Tis not the gift of fortune.

E L W I N.

Yet she sometimes can pull the mightiest
down.—(*aside*)
I've heard that his domestick happiness
Exceeds his glory!—That he loves his Rena.—

E L B E R T.

Loves her!—He lives, but in his Rena's love.
Joy of his heart, and end of all his wishes.
He seem'd by nature only made for war;
An arm resistless, and a soul of fire.
But Rena soon new-form'd his rugged frame,
Calm'd his fierce soul, and harmoniz'd his virtues.

E L W I N.

Soon will I put these virtues to a proof,
He little fears—Soon shew that misery
And happiness may flow from the same source.—(*aside*)

Enter Randolph.

R A N D O L P H, [*to Elwin*]

The king, my lord—(*they speak aside*)

E L B E R T.

What means this wild confusion
In every face?—Grant Heav'n, that all is right!—
Elwin, I go to Rena— (*Exit Elbert.*)

E L W I N.

Randolph, haste!—
Tell Mortar, 'tis the King's command, that Elbert
Be instantly secur'd, without alarm,
And guarded secretly, till farther orders.

(*Exit Randolph.*
From)

BUTHRED:

From the other side of the Stage enter Osbrighte.

OSBRIGHTE.

Elwin I stand upon a precipice.

ELWIN.

Might I presume!—But my unhappy council
Is still displeasing——

OSBRIGHTE.

Think not of what's past.---

Speak if thou can'st!—I am bereft of thought.

ELWIN.

Have you seen Rena?—Is the storm allay'd?---

OSBRIGHTE.

Prostrate on th' earth, the beauteous mourner lies,
In wild despair, calling for Buthred's aid,

With eyes thrown up to Heaven; while gentle Ela
Hangs weeping over her, in saddest silence.

I stood aghast!—Cold horror froze my heart;

When Efrick enter'd hastily; and told

He saw a troop come sweeping o'er the downs.——

The news awoke my soul.---Should it be Buthred?---

ELWIN.

My Liege, shake off this weakness, this remorse!

Its qualms unman you; and each moment now

Is big with fate.---He comes!---Perhaps to seize

Your sacred person.---Then the crown's his own.

He was too cautious, while you might oppose him,

To take the rebel's offer!---Were his faith

Unshaken, he had never spar'd their lives,

To let them rise again. Such lenity

Is the most plausible, the surest bait

For popular favour---the best lure for treason:

A crown brooks no competitor. His pride

Each moment will take fire; and make your life

One scene of trouble.---Services, like this,

Cancel respect, and look above reward.---(Trumpets.)

OSBRIGHTE.

His trumpets!---Quick, advise what must be done.---

ELWIN.

ELWIN.

The moment he's within the gate, I'll seize him,
 Before his men can enter, as a traitor.
 Nor are proofs wanting to support the charge.
 You should, long since, have known them; but your
 -love,

Too firm; too credulous, was still his guard.
 Elbert already is secur'd.---The rest
 Robb'd of their leaders thus, will strait disperse.

*(Exit Elwin.)*OSBRIGHT, *(alone.)*

It must be so!---My soul could never else
 Have wrong'd the love it bore him. Faithful Elwin!
 Thou'lt calm'd the pangs which tore my bleeding
 heart,
 With vain, unmerited remorse,---*(starting)*---The
 traitor!

*Enter Buthred, Elwin, Morcar, Guards.*BUTHRED, *(stir'd)*

'Tis false as hell! he! Osbrighte give such orders!
 He never would! His justice will avenge
 This insult on his friend---*(seeing Osbrighte)*---My
 liege behold!--

Let loose your vengeance! Vindicate your name--

ELWIN *(advancing.)*

Sire!--In the face of heav'n; and here, before
 You, my Liege-Lord, I stand against Earl Buthred,
 Call him a traitor, give his faith the lie
 And trample on his honour.

BUTHRED.

Is it he?-----

Am I awake?---Does Osbrighte see this treatment?---
 And flies not, moves not, speaks not?---Innocence!
 Be thou my guardian!---Traitor, *(to Elwin)* in thy
 teeth!--

Abandon'd slave! thou liest in thy throat!

Thy canker'd heart gives thy false tongue the lye.

And now he speaks!---*(to Elwin)*---Be

Be still, my soul! In this important moment,
Let caution curb thy transports.—(To Osbrighte)—I
demand

The right of combat with my false accuser;
This instant, hand to hand.—Heav'n will decide!
Unerringly. I once—but that's no more—

OSBRIGHTE.

Earl Buthred!—For the name of friend thy crimes
Have cancell'd and their blackness blotted out
All memory of thy love! Defend thy cause,
And look for justice, whose impartial hand
No ill-judg'd mercy shall arrest—

BUTHRED.

I ask

No mercy!—Prove the charge, or grant the combat.

ELWIN.

Grant it, my liege! my eager heart pants for it.
Tho' proofs as glaring as the mid-day sun—

OSBRIGHTE.

The combat?—No.—His looks avow his treason.
Ourself will be the judge.—If justice hold
The balance doubtful, let him claim it then.

BUTHRED.

Does heav'n hear this?—hear Osbrighte call me
traitor?—

All ties are broken; love, respect, and duty;
And nature must have way.—Let all my life!—
Let yester ev'n—Let Osbrighte standing there,
A King with pow'r o'er Buthred, prove my treason.
All-judging heav'n!—(To Elwin.)—Thou knowest
thy protection!

Else would'st thou stand before a thunderbolt
In mid career, as soon as brave me thus.
But thou'rt beneath my wrath!—Burst not my heart!
Let indignation steel thee!

REN A. (within.)

Where's my lord?—

I will have way—no force shall keep me from him!

A TRAGEDY;

39

OSBRIGHT.

By heav'n she comes! (*aside*) Let Buthred be secur'd!
Morcar be your's the charge to guard the traitor.

Exeunt Osbright and Elwin,

Enter Rena.

R E N A. (*running to Buthred.*)

I will have way---Give me my love---my lord!--

B U T H R E D. (*embracing.*)

O! joy of my fond heart!--Thou only hope
Of happiness that ever sooth'd my soul!
Thou mak'st an heav'n!-----The graces which sur-
round thee,

Can blunt the sting of grief, speak peace to madness,
And charm despair.-----The tyrant meant to soften
My wrongs, by leaving thee.

R E N A. (*starting.*)

Wrongs?---Gracious heav'n!

And has he told you?-----

B U T H R E D.

Told me?---See these guards.

R E N A.

O! my prophetic fears!--he ne'er will stop,
Until the measure of his guilt is full.---
On what pretence.

B U T H R E D.

The worst, my Rena, treason!
But heav'n is just, and will avenge my wrongs---
Will disabuse his poison'd ear; and shew
My faith in brighter lustre.

R E N A.

Never, never,
Will the base heart of Osbright do you justice;
His guilty fear will ever be your foe.

B U T H R E D.

What can this mean?-----Your looks, your
words portend
Some mystery of ruin---Can the wrath

O!

Of heav'n go farther than the wrongs I know?
My soul's alarm'd to madness.--Speak I charge you.

Enter Elwin and two Officers.

E L W I N.

Lady *(To Rena)* the King has order'd that you
--leave
This place--your women wait you in your chamber

R E N A.
No!—Never will I leave my Buthred more!

E L W I N. *(aside to Morcar.)*

Morcar, my friend! when Rena is remov'd,
Let Elbert be admitted to Earl Buthred.
I'll send him straight. You'll watch each look and word.
Something may drop that shall unfold their treasons.

B U T H R E D.

Inhuman tyrant!—what new insult's this?

E L W I N.

Tyrant!—*(looking contemptuously on Buthred)*—
Then pow'r shall force her hence—

(Catching her hand and giving it to Ela.)

R E N A. *(struggling.)*

It shall not!

Drag!—tear me piece-meal—I will not—O, Buthred!
(As Elwin forces her off, Buthred is seized.)

B U T H R E D.

Has heav'n no thunder!—Does its vengeance sleep
Carless or impotent!—But, hold my heart!—
Morcar!—we have been fellow-soldiers, Morcar!

M O R C A R.

My lord, the highest glory of my life
Has been to fellow you to victory.

B U T H R E D.

Then, Morcar, tell me, for thou canst, what meant
she—

What Rena meant, by those dark dreadful hints?—

M O R C A R.

M O R C A R.

Be happy, O my lord, in ignorance,
A moment longer.—Soon, too soon, you'll know it—
Ill-tidings fly upon the livid wing
Of lightning——

B U T H R E D. (*impatiently.*)

[Tell me, Morcar, I conjure you.]

M O R C A R.

Be calm my lord!—Impatience weakens virtue;
Takes off her guard; and yields her to the foe,
She scorn'd while reason watch'd in her defence.

B U T H R E D.

O Morcar!—Ease my soul, but of one fear!

M O R C A R.

Virtue, like Buthred's, can't indulge a fear!
Can't build a hope on shadows—Life, and all
The cares, which fill it, are beneath his thought.

B U T H R E D.

What can this caution lead to?——Speak——

My brain

Works into madness—Doubt is worse than death.

M O R C A R.

Ill ease the pain of doubt—I wish I could
More happily.—But you must be obey'd——
Osbrichte, with all his virtues, (he has many—
Many, and shining; Buthred knows he has!)
Osbrichte is but a man; and men are slaves
To human passions——

B U T H R E D. (*startling*)

Passions!—human passions!——

By heav'n he dar'd not—dar'd not have a thought.

M O R C A R.

My lord, think where, and how, we are!—my
life——

B U T H R E D. (*trembling.*)

I'm calm!—Proceed—Passions——I will be
calm——

MORCAR.

M O R C A R.

The anguish of his soul is too affecting!—
I can't proceed— (*aside*)—My lord, I must go
hence—

But see, your faithful Elbert comes to share
The sufferings of his friend!—He can unfold
The mystery of this ruin!—But beware!—
Curb well your transports!—Think, that ev'ry ear
Is open, ev'ry eye intent upon you.

(*As Elbert enters from one side of the stage,
Morcar goes of at the other with the Guard.*)

E L B E R T.

(*Seeing Buthred stand with his eyes fix'd upon the
ground*)

Can that be Buthred?—that the son of Brocard!
The man whose frown was death!—Whose mighty
acts

Astonish'd fame, and seem'd the work of fate!—
O Buthred! reason, virtue, manhood blush!—
Yielding to sorrow never brings relief.

B U T H R E D.

Relief!—the hand of heav'n can't reach it now.
Death only can relieve; and I must seek it.

E L B E R T.

Let those seek death, who are afraid to live.
Despair's beneath you!—'Tis the coward's courage;
Distrustful of his own abilities,
To stand the shock; and struggle with destruction!
Hope lights the brave man's dungeon—Live and hope.

B U T H R E D.

The flatterer has forsook my breast! I dare not
E'en soothe my fainting soul with pleasing wishes!
It loaths th' impossible, deceitful phantoms.
But what can I hope for?

ELBERT

A T R A G E D Y. 43

ELBERT. (*in a low voice*).

Revenge! Revenge!
The hope, the happiness of injur'd man!—
While Osbriht's lives, let that possess your soul.

B U T H R E D.

O could I hope to seize the tyrant's throat—
But vain delusion! What avails e'en vengeance?
Can it go back? Undo what's done?—My love,
My honour's ruin'd.

ELBERT.

Not 'till you submit
With patience to th' affront. The deadliest wrong,
When foil'd in th' attempt leaves no dishonour.

B U T H R E D (*starting*).

Foil'd in th' attempt!—th' attempt?

ELBERT.

No more!—
The sacred mysteries of your marriage-bed
Are unprophan'd—Your Rena's purity
Unfalsified as the sun-beam.

B U T H R E D (*trembling*).

Say'st thou Elbert?

My Elbert say'st thou so? Thou scorn'st to raise
A baseless hope, whose fall must plunge thy friend
In aggravated woe! Then hence despair!—
Vengeance, I'm wholly thine! Tho' how to
seek—

ELBERT.

Be that my care!—Justice has rais'd her arm,
Nor shall the tyrant's guilt another morn
Glare in the offended eye of heav'n unpunish'd.
Move this way yet!—I would not be o'erheard—
I've gain'd a soldier of the tyrant's guard.—

Enter Morcar with Guards.

M O R C A R.

My lord, I'm order'd to convey you hence.

Obedience,

Obedience, tho' a duty, oft is painful.
I wish I might dispense——

B U T H R E D.

A pris'ner too?—

Under this roof? Be heav'n's dread will obey'd.—
Lead to my dungeon! Ev'ry place alike
Where tyranny prevails is hell to me.

[*Exeunt.*]

End of the THIRD ACT.

ACT

A T R A G E D Y.

A C T IV.

S C E N E, *The Hall.*

Enter on one Side, Osbrighte, Elwin, and Guards; on the other, Morcar, with Elbert guarded.

O S B R I G H T E.

ESCAP'D! By Heav'n I see you're traitor's all.—

M O R C A R.

My liege, it was impossible to stop him.
Elbert made good the pass, 'gainst all their efforts,
While Buthred leap'd the wall.—Five breathless
bodies

Attest your soldier's faith——

O S B R I G H T E.

Audacious traitors——

Search out the darkest, deepest, noisome dungeon,
And plunge him headlong in eternal horrors.
His guilt, his treasons be his sole companions,
His food, hope, comfort.

E L B E R T, *(as he is led off.)*

Tyrant! I embrace

My fate with pleasure, since my friend is free!

He will revenge me—— *(Exit guarded.)*

O S B R I G H T E.

Morcar, sound to horse!——

This instant I'll to York—— *(Exit Morcar)*

You go with me.—*(to Elwin)*

Morcar shall tarry; and defend this castle.

The traitor's arms are here; and it commands

The country round——

E L W I N.

Might I presume t' advise,

You'd send to York.—Morcar should hasten thither,
And levy force sufficient to confront

The

The danger.—All the country round is fill'd
With Buthred's vassals, whose superior force
Would soon o'erpower your guards.—You're here in
safety.

Rena is hostage for what terms you please

Enter Morcar.

M O R C A R (*to the king*)

To horse—to horse!—Their force is scatter'd yet;
Their daring not confirm'd enough to face
Their Sovereign!—If you stay they'll think it fear,
And all fly off to Buthred.—The king's presence
Is in itself an army against rebels.
The boldest course is often safest—Now
A mighty troop bears to the western gate—

O S B R I G H T E.

And I'll receive them with a soldier's welcome!
Come on!—This sword shall crush their impious
hopes—

[*Exeunt all but Elwin.*]

E L W I N.

Curst fate! that he should 'scape so!—If they
meet,
On any terms of parley, all my schemes
Recoil on my own head, and I am ruin'd!—
Vengeance inspire me now.—(*pause*)—Yes, that must
be it.

SCENE, *On and before the Wall of the
Castle.*

Osbrichte, Elwin, Morcar, *Guards on the Walls,*
Buthred and Soldiers advancing to the Gate.

(*Trumpets sound a parley from the Walls.*)

O S B R I G H T E.

What means this hostile shew, this din of arms!

What

A T R A G E D Y

47

What foe invades?—What rebel dares to raise
His arm against his King?

B U T H R E D.

Ungrateful, base

Osbrighte! for words afford no blacker name—

Thus I renounce allegiance to a tyrant;

(Throwing away his staff.)

Thus hurl defiance in thy face.—Descend—

If thou'rt a man, descend, and do me right

Here with thy sword; and spare the guiltless blood

Which else must deluge o'er this wretched land

To expiate—

O S B R I G H T E.

I take thee at thy word!

Draw off your men—I here lay down my state,

And stoop to meet you. Morcar, ope the gate,

And see the field is fair.

E L W I N.

Forbear my liege!

The combat's mine; I claim it.—I reveal'd

The mystery of his treason; which my sword

Shall prove upon him. 'Till he clears his honour

In fight with me, he cannot meet another.

B U T H R E D.

Can Elwin think so gallantly? Oh come,

Come first.—Thy fate begins the sacred work

Of justice, and prepares for nobler vengeance.

[Elwin goes off.]

(Turning to his men.)

Draw back, my friends! While I've a soldier's right

Let not an arm be rais'd in my behalf.

If I should fall, obey the will of Heav'n—

Return in peace and think no more of Buthtred.—

(Turning to Osbrighte.)

And now, in this short calm, before the storm,

In which of one, or both of us shall perish,

Tyrant attend!—And hear the voice of Heav'n.

Speak from my mouth the vengeance that impends

Enter

Enter Elwin and two Soldiers forcing in Rona.

ELWIN, *holding his sword against Rona.*

Thus I begin the combat! Here I pierce
The traitor's heart!

B U T H R E D .

O Morcar! Osbrighte! save her.

O S B R I C H T E .

Hold, Elwin! ——— What wouldst thou attempt?

E L W I N .

My liege! —

Morcar, draw back, I will not be prevented.

I strike, if one of you advance a step.

Forgive, my liege, the warmth of honest zeal! —

Shall I stand by, and see my sovereign stoop

To such indignity? — The thought is treason!

If thou (*to Buthred*) art innocent, disband thy power's;

Give up thy sword, and yield thyself to justice.

B U T H R E D .

Can Heav'n look tamely on, and see its justice

Insulted thus? — Are innocence and virtue

No more its care? What shall I do to save her?

Elwin, withdraw your sacrilegious hand —

Restore my wife, and ye shall all escape —

All shall go hence in safety.

E L W I N .

Shall escape!

Such insolence but aggravates your guilt —

Yield, or I strike this moment.

B U T H R E D .

Osbrighte, hear me!

Your breast once glow'd with sentiments of honour.

Can you bear this? — To crouch for safety thus?

You once were brave ——— Once ———

O S B R I C H T E .

Elwin, on thy life,

This

This instant sheath thy sword.—Base insolence!
 Traitor, I scorn your charge, and come to meet you

E L W I N.

Let my life pay the forfeit, when your honour
 Is vindicated from this insult!—Once,
 This once, I dare to disobey your orders.
 Does Buthred hesitate?—This moment then—

B U T H R E D.

What shall I do?—Hold!—I forgive you all!—
 Forgive my wrongs, and here, abjure for ever
 All thoughts of vengeance—Let her be but safe!

R E N A.

*[Raising her head, which she has 'till now
 held down, covered with her band.]*

Hold, Buthred! whither would thy madness run?
 Wouldst thou submit to bear a tyrant's outrage?—
 Give up your own, your country's liberty,
 To save a life I scorn on such base terms?
 My blood, like fam'd Virginia's, shall be hallow'd
 By Buthred's vengeance to my country's freedom;
 And raise eternal honour to our name.

B U T H R E D.

Transcendent virtue! Why will nature bear
 The conflict longer, and my heart not burst?

E L W I N. *(raising his band, as if to strike.)*

Death! shall I dally thus?—Yield, or by heav'n—

B U T H R E D.

I yield! I yield. O spare her life!—I yield—
 Retire, my friends, and leave me to my fate!
 Heav'n will some other way relieve my country.
 I am unworthy, and its hand's against me.

*[Throws down his sword, and rushes dis-
 tractedly into the Castle, while his men draw
 off, with gestures of distress.]*

B U T H R E D.

O S B R I G H T E.

Morcar, secure the gates, and man the walls.
I go not hence to-night—My faithful Elwin,
Whose care ne'er sleeps, how shall my love reward
thee?

E L W I N.

Where duty bids the utmost in our power,
And love thinks all too little, kind acceptance,
O'er pays the weak endeavour.—But, my liege!
Prudence and honour, equally demand
Earl Buthred's instant death!

O S B R I G H T E.

I'll see him first;
While his soul struggles in this storm of passion,
And sound, myself, the depth of his designs.

[Scene falls,

S C E N E, *The Hall.*

Osbrichte, Buthred, Morcar, *Guards*—(Buthred
disarm'd)—Osbrichte waves his hand, and
all but Buthred retire.

O S B R I G H T E.

I come not Buthred to insult your fall;
To trample on your ruin!—I disdain
Such low revenge. Blushing regard would rather
Plead for a name, once dear—

B U T H R E D.

Away!—My soul
Disdains all knowledge of thee!—Art thou he,
Whom my heart lov'd—whose steps I led to glory?

O S B R I G H T E.

Buthred! My heart would offer terms of friendship.

B U T H R E D.

Friendship! restore my liberty this moment!
Kneel for forgiveness, and I may o'erlook thee—

But

A TRAGEDY.

But never hope for more.——The cowardice
That plac'd my wife between thee and my sword,
Sunk thee beneath my vengeance,

O S E B R I G H T E.

Ha! beware!——

Buthred, thou'rt hanging o'er a gulph; and mercy
Provok'd thus, may draw back the hand she stretch'd
To save thy fall!—Purge off the charge of treason
By thine oath, and Elbert's—Swear anew
Faith and allegiance—Leave your wife an hostage!

B U T H R E D.

My wife an hostage!—Righteous heav'n! the
blood

Of Sigard, that still reeks upon my sword,
Is hostage for me!—Leave my wife with thee?
To tempt new outrage in the hour of riot!

O S E B R I G H T E.

Your sov'reign's royal word shall be her surety
For honourable treatment. On these terms,
And these alone, I'll let thee go in peace.

B U T H R E D.

Peace!—Not the wealth, the empire of the world,
The groans of mankind—Not the prayers of angels
Should charm my vengeance—win one thought of
peace.

Should heav'n relent, and free me from thy pow'r,
Thro' ev'ry gloomy, base retreat of guilt,
Each lurking place of fear will I pursue thee—
I'll seize thee! tear thee trembling from the altar.

O S E B R I G H T E.

Shall I bear this?—Black traitor! conscious guilt
Assumes in vain this thin disguise of phrenzy.
Insulted mercy now gives place to vengeance.
I'll study tortures for your soul!—This moment—
Know, that I go this moment to your Rena,
No terms shall bribe, no flattery win compliance.
I'll rush upon her, rattle all her charms,

32 B U T H R E D: A

And while I satiate ev'ry greedy sense,
I'll glad my soul to hear her call on Buthred.

B U T H R E D

My Rena's safe, and I despise your threats.
Her love, her truth, her honour will defend her---

(Exit Osbrighte.

Defend her!—Oh!—My Rena, thou must die!

And is my only consolation plac'd

In Rena's death?—Can I with Rena's death?—

That grief would stupify, or burning rage

Distract at once, without this ling'ring torture

Of grief that leads to—Madness were a mercy—

(Guards enter, and lead him off.

SCENE, A Chamber.

Morcar,—Ela.

M O R C A R

Fair Ela, your request is hard, but beauty

Pleading for virtue must not be refus'd.

Osbrighte will soon retire.—Within this hour,

I'll lead the beauteous mourner to her lord.

Heav'n heal their griefs, and give an happier meeting.

(Exit Ela.

Enter Elwin.

E L W I N

Morcar, the moments of anxiety,

While eager expectation and suspense

Wait pausing for the rip'ning of our hopes

At length are over—Fortune is my own.

Osbrighte as soon as morning lights his way,

Repairs to York, and leaves Earl Buthred here

To my disposal, who will guard him well.

M O R C A R

And tell me Elwin, what is Buthred's crime?

ELWIN

E L W I N.

To Osbrighte, Rena! and to me ambition. —
 My hopes could never flourish, while his frown
 Might blast their bloom, — nor Osbrighte be secure
 And happy, while he lives, and may avenge — —
 We may forgive the wrongs we feel. — But never
 The man we've wrong'd — His life alarms our fears,
 And prudent fear prevents remotest danger.
 Osbrighte is gone to rest, and weary'd nature
 Unequal to the workings of my soul,
 Must be indulg'd. — At the first blush of dawn
 My genius triumphs over Buthred's virtue.

(Exit Elwin.)

M O R C A R. (alone.)

Could I be this man's friend? — What kindred vice
 Perceiv'd he in my nature, that should win
 His confidence? — My soul detests the thought.
 Honour looks down discountenanc'd, and virtue
 Sickens, polluted by the base connection.
 Before the King's departure, I'll unfold
 The whole — and then I'll quit him. — While I stay,
 High in unbounded confidence and favour,
 Honour binds duty, and I must obey him.

SCENE, Buthred's Apartment.

B U T H R E D. (alone) — Discovered.

At length 'tis night — and now the wearied world,
 Lull'd in the downy lap of sleep, renews
 Its wasted vigour, losing ev'ry care
 In kind oblivion. Darkness suits the gloom,
 The blacker gloom, that shrouds my joyless soul,
 But yields no rest — No respite from my grief.
 O that with brutes I could lie down to sleep,
 And rise refresh'd as to a new existence.
 No sense of evils past, no boding fear
 Breaks their repose! The present they enjoy,
 Nor fear the future! — But ill-fated man.

C 3

Rack'd

Rack'd with remembrance, anxious hopes, and fears,
 Can never say, "This moment I am happy"
 To-day, the fancy pictures pleasing scenes,
 And says, "To-morrow I shall be most happy."
 To-morrow comes, and brings us all we wish'd for;
 Yet still th' insatiate soul proposes more.
 And the same round——

Enter Rena.

Ye gracious pow'rs of Heav'n!
 Some angel sure, in pity to my grief,
 Assumes that likeness dearest to my soul,
 And comes with mercy——

R E N A.

O my love, my lord!——

B U T H R E D (*embracing.*)

'Tis she!—By all my hopes of heav'n 'tis Rena!

R E N A.

Now burst my heart; and I shall die in bliss.

B U T H R E D.

Ye pow'rs who order—who delight in virtue,
 Look down on bleeding innocence, and own,
 If justice guides your rule, I must have vengeance.

R E N A.

When I am dead, O may the smiles of heav'n
 Brighten upon my Lord, and bless his life.

B U T H R E D.

Think not of death!—Hope promises revenge,
 And you must live to see it!—To behold
 Your wrongs redress'd!—Justice were incomplete,
 And vengeance else would gasp unsatisfy'd.——

R E N A.

What sharper tortures yet shall tear my heart!
 Deep tho' my griefs, fear doubles ev'ry pang,
 Fear for my Buthred! for—O what a load
 Is wretched life!—How shall I lay it down!——

BUTH.

B U T H R E D (*tenderly*)

Rena!—I charge you Rena!—Guard your life;
While honour gilds it; makes it worth your care—
But Rena, I would die to save my honour!—
Tho' my soul lives but in you, guard your honour?—
For what is life without it?—Rena!—Rena!—

R E N A

Lord of my heart, I see, I fear your love;
That never shone so beautiful before,—
So bright as in this trial!—Yes, your Rena
Will guard her honour; guard her Buthred's honour
Death looks not terrible, when virtue calls;
When Buthred's virtue, struggling with his love,
Points out the sacred way; and bids his Rena
Fly with her rescued honour to its arms.

B U T H R E D

O sum of all perfection!—How my soul
Reflects thy radiance, brightens in the blaze
Of glory that surrounds thee—

Enter Ela, who beckons to Rena.

R E N A

I attend.

O Buthred I must go—must leave thee thus—

B U T H R E D

We part, my love, to meet in happiness! —

R E N A

Yes my lov'd lord—we'll meet again—in heav'n—
Till then—

B U T H R E D

I charge you by this dear embrace,
To live, and hope for happiness—

R E N A

I go!—

Once more! But one look more!—Perhaps the last
Shall ever bless these eyes!—O Buthred, Buthred!—

(Exeunt Rena and Ela.)

C 4

BUTH-

B U T H R E D (*alone*)

Let me not think of her!—a melting softness
 Unmans my heart, and blunts it for revenge!—
 Tho' cast beneath the reach of hope, that pow'r
 Which hurl'd me unsuspecting down, can raise me
 To work its will;—and (*throws himself on the floor.*)
 here I'll wait its call!—

*Enter Elbert, his sword bloody.*E L B E R T. (*in a low voice*)

Buthred!—my Lord!—Where can he be!—My
 soul
 Misgives me!—Hark!—And yet he should be here!
 Else, why that centinel?—My Lord!—Earl Butbred!

B U T H R E D. (*starting up*)

By all my wrongs!—My hopes!—The voice of
 Elbert.

E L B E R T. (*giving him the sword.*)

Vengeance calls Butbred!—Sends him this by
 Elbert,

B U T H R E D.

And do I live to grasp a sword, once more?
 Tyrant I come.—Grim Vengeance lights my way,
 And horror stalks before—(*going.*)

E L B E R T.

A moment's pause

Secures your hopes! Wait till your light's remov'd.

B U T H R E D (*looking at the sword.*)

And bloody!—happy omen!—

E L B E R T.

The slave's blood,

Who in the morn betray'd us: At your door,
 I slew the wretch asleep upon his guard.

B U T H R E D

But say! What miracle freed thee?

ELBERT

E L B E R T.

That pow'r,
Whose care is justice.—Strangers to this castle;
They threw me in the tower, that's o'er the vault.
Whose mouth o'ergrown with briars and choak'd
with stones,

Opens among the rocks, above the stream.
When all was still, I wrench'd the secret door.
Forc'd my way through, and gain'd the neighb'ring
wood,

Where stood a few of your most faithful friends,
Helpless, amaz'd, and gazing on each other,
In sad suspense.—My coming gave new life,
But still our numbers were too weak to force
The tyrant's guards; and something must be done,
Without a moment's loss.—So strait I sent,
Edred and Algar, in your name to Ivar—

B U T H R E D.

Ivar!—My country's ruin'd?—Bring the Danes!
Let loose their fury, rapines, rapes, and murders!
Elbert!—Thou'lt marr'd the labours of my life,
And overturn'd my honours!—

E L B E R T.

All delusion—
Away with ev'ry thought but of revenge!
That, only that, can raise Earl Buthred's honour.
Which now lies bleeding in the dust—His own,
His Rena's honour.—

B U T H R E D.

May black infamy,
And foul reproach, for ever brand his name,
Who'd build his honour on his country's ruin.
Cries of complaint, and direful execration
Pour'd forth to Heav'n, in bitterness of soul
By every ravish'd maid, and childless mother,
Shall be our dread memorial.—Let me die!
Let Rena die!

E L B E R T.

Will Osbrighte let her die,
C 5 While

While beauty feeds desire? While hate to you
Shall urge him? ———

B U T H R E D.

No! By Heav'n the tyrant shall not—
By Heav'n, he shall not, tho' the world were ruin'd.

E L B E R T.

Think not of ruin!—You but save your country.
Has the red wrath of Heaven so dire a scourge
To wreak its vengeance, as a tyrant's rule?
Give him to justice, and your rescu'd country,
That groans beneath his vices, shall revive,
And bloom again in happiness and glory. ———
Ivar, by this, draws near ———

B U T H R E D.

And must I meet him? —
Meet!—Make a friendship with my country's foe,
And seal it with its ruin?

E L B E R T.

O beware!

Relapse not! Tempt not Heav'n by such vain weak-
ness.

Think that on this important moment hangs
Your fate.—That if surprise prevent him not,
Elwin will baffle your attempts again.
You fight now for your country.—Your revenge
Goes hand in hand with its deliverance,
Hallow'd by Heav'n to such a glorious end.

B U T H R E D.

Give me revenge, and let me free my country.
I ask not longer life. (*kneeling*) O witness Heav'n!
Who read'st the secret purpose of the heart,
Not all the pow'r ambition ever gasp'd for,
Has charms to tempt my steady soul, or warp
My love, my filial duty to my country.

[*Exeunt.*]

End of the F O U R T H A C T.

A C T

A C T V.

S C E N E, *an Antichamber.*

Enter Osbright (from a door in the flat) meeting
Morcar. ——— (Alarms)

O S B R I G H T E.

W HENCE these alarms, which thus from
 every side

Disturb the sacred silence of the night?

M O R C A R.

My liege, the country all in flames, and th' air
 Tortur'd with helpless shrieks and dying groans,
 Their wonted harbingers, proclaim the Danes.

O S B R I G H T E.

Would it were day, that I might burst upon them!
 Might pour my vengeance! — In the spoiler's blood
 These flames shall be extinguish'd.

M O R C A R.

Rash attempt!

The devastation spread to such extent,
 Thus in the instant, proves their force too strong:
 For you to cope with. Might my counsel weigh,
 You'll march for York directly, while the night
 Covers your weakness.

O S B R I G H T E.

Never will I fly —

The sun shall witness that I scorn their force.
 Perfidious traitor! — This is Buthred's truce:
 They follow him — But I'll defeat his schemes —
 This moment he shall die.

M O R C A R.

Suspend your rage! —

You've been deceiv'd — Earl Buthred is no traitor.

O S B R I G H T E. *(Starting)*

How, Morcar! Not a traitor! — That would raise
 An army gainst my soul, more terrible
 Than all the Danes alive —

M O R -

M O R C A R.

Heav'n save your soul ;

And from the guilty author of this ruin
Require the dread account——Earl Buthred's
wrong'd——

Elwin, his sole accuser, own'd the charge
Was feign'd ;—that envy and ambition urg'd him,
When Rena's fatal beauty fir'd your fancy,
To fan the flame—to stifle all your scruples,
With ev'ry breath of flattery, every loose
Incentive to desire.

O S B R I G H T E (*much affected*.)

Can this be true!

Could Heav'n permit?—Morcar I think you honest.—

M O R C A R.

My life upon the proof—Let both be brought
Here face to face; you'll see the groundless charge
Fade in his presence, like the shades of night
Before the orient sun.

O S B R I G H T E.

Why didst thou not

Inform me sooner—time enough to save——

M O R C A R.

Since you retir'd, he told me all in triumph!
I should not have conceal'd it.

O S B R I G H T E.

Where's the slave?

M O R C A R.

I call'd him on the first alarm, when I—
He stood aghast—cold fear numb'd every sense,
And stupified his soul——That gaiety,
And unconcern, which look'd so much like spirit,
Fled at the sight of danger; fled, when guilt
Blacken'd each fear, and open'd hell before him.

O S B R I G H T E.

Infernal wretch! But I shall live—O Morcar!
Could Buthred see my heart, its pangs would glut
His keenest vengeance—Grief is happiness
To what I feel.—Here! here! th' eternal sting—

M O R.

M O R C A R.

Have better hope—This storm may yet be laid,
 And Buthred's injur'd honour reconcil'd,
 Acknowledgement, fair harbinger of peace,
 Sweet smiling promiser of with'd redress,
 Disarms resentment—Nor need Osbrighte blush—
 Souls truly noble are above the pride,
 The low, false pride, that aggravates offence
 By persevering; and holds honour wounded
 By owning human error.—Would my liege—

O S B R I G H T E.

No Morcar, never; while the threats of danger
 May seem to bend my soul!—'T would look like fear,
 Else would I fly this moment—at his feet
 Prostrate my humble heart; embrace his knees,
 And bear his spurns with patience—And if heav'n
 Assist my arms— [Clashing of swords, &c.]

M O R C A R.

But hark, the cries grow louder—
 I've man'd the walls, and doubled ev'ry watch—
 Your presence would inspire new life.

O S B R I G H T E.

I follow. [Exit Morcar.
 (alone) Will morning never rise!—Oh give me light
 To see my foes! I would not fall unknown,
 Unnotic'd, unreveng'd, among the croud,
 In undistinguish'd ruin; for now, death
 Is my soul's only wish—By heav'n, the villain!

Enter Elwin.

Elwin, produce the proofs of Buthred's treason—
 This very instant.

E L W I N.

Proofs!—This is no time
 For scanning proofs—The Danes on every side—

O S B R I G H T E.

This instant prove his guilt; or by yon Heaven—

E L W I N.

My Liege, you sought no proof—but my suspicion.

O S B R I G H T E.

Think not t' escape by such low fallacy.

2 B U T H R E D: A

Unfold some secret council---tell some act
Pregnant with circumstance, to give suspicion,
At least the semblance of being justly founded.

E L W I N.

As soon might I replace at your command
The fancy'd figures in yon faded cloud,
As shew in their just force, each word, each gesture,
Glance of the eye, and flexion of the voice
That gives suspicion; to the observant eye
The force of clearest proof! I thought him guilty,---
I knew his death essential to your safety,
After the vain attempt on beauteous Rena---
And held that guilt sufficient.

O S B R I G H T E.

Curst attempt!
And doubly curst the base suggester of it;
Who in the unguarded moment like the toad
Close at the sleeping traveller's ear pour'd in
His poison to my soul---(souts)

E L W I N.

They're come!---the Danes---

O S B R I G H T E.

Vile---trembling---execrable slave, no Danes
Shall disappoint my vengeance.---(going to kill him)

Enter Morcar.

M O R C A R.

(Catching Osbrighte's arm) Hold my liege,
Dishonour not your sword with such a stain---

E L W I N.

How, Morcar! You!---
(To Osbrighte)---I know my Sov'reign's justice;
Whate'er I've done, your pleasure was my motive;
And sure the end should justify the means
At least to you---

M O R C A R.

So grovels in the dust
The wounded serpent, whose proud crest e'erwhile
Sparkling with eager fury for his prey,
Flash'd fiery rage---A few short hours are past,
Since you exulted in a loftier strain. But

But short's the triumph of the wicked man!
The glitter of success, that blazon's guilt,
Glares for a moment, like the lightning's flash,
To plunge the gloomy soul in deeper darkness,
And double all its horrors.

ELWIN.
Is this well?

Morcar, thou seest me fallen;—

MORCAR.

Below revenge!—

Thy sov'reign scorns thy forfeit life.——

OSBRIGHT.

Vile wretch!——

Seek, if thou dar'st, thy fate amid the foe—

Away—— [Exit Elwin guarded.]

Now, Morcar, will I see Earl Buthred;—

Myself will set him free.——

MORCAR.

Alas, too late!

Earl Buthred is escap'd! I found the foldier

Slain at his door, and his apartments empty;

And much, I fear, he has join'd the Danes; for now

His name from every quarter rings.

OSBRIGHT.

Thanks bounteous fate!—I thank thee for his guilt.

Morcar, thy words exalt me from despair,

My soul is free—Earl Buthred is a traitor!

He joins my foes! He fights against his King.

MORCAR.

Would that he ne'er had cause—some injuries

Too strong for nature, overbalance duty

And make revenge a virtue.

OSBRIGHT.

Fatal truth!——

Yes, Buthred's justified—His wrongs absolve him—

Dare I meet him?—Will not my soul start back,

And tremble at the lightning of his sword? (*aside.*)

Thank heav'n at length 'tis day.

MORCAR.

B U T H R E D ;

M O R C A R ,

A doubtful light

Precedes the dawn, and open scenes of horror,

Far better buried in eternal night—

Where yester-evening, plenty and content

Sat smiling at each other, on the fruits

Of industry ; now meagre desolation

Stalks o'er the smoking ruins—

O S B R I G H T E .

Shall I ever

Head my brave Britons more ?—The ravagers

Shall rue their daring—

Enter a Soldier wounded.

S O L D I E R , (to Morcar.)

Haste !—The Western gate !—

M O R C A R .

Is there no faith in man !—The post of Algar—

S O L D I E R .

Brave Algar's faith is written in his blood.

A number of Earl Buthred's boldest men

Led on by Elbert, bursting from the castle,

Attack'd our rear, while resting on our arms

We watch'd the Danes. 'Twas all confusion, slaughter,

Resistance was impossible---Scarce one

Had time to grasp his sword—(falls)

O S B R I G H T E .

And Elbert too ?---

Can I trust none ?---You, Morcar, had the guard---

Can I trust none ?

M O R C A R .

My Liege, an adverse pow'r

O'er-rules---There must have been some secret way

Unknown to us,---While I have life, this hand,

This sword, shall never fail you !---Justice now

Arms in your cause, and animates each heart---

O S B R I G H T E .

Call my brave men, my Britons!---We'll regain

The gate, before the traitors are supported---

They burst upon them in a storm---cut thro',

And fight our way to York.--

Enter

A T R A G E D Y. 65

Enter Buthred and Soldiers.

B U T H R E D.

Stay, Tyrant!---Base,

Inhospitable ravisher.

O S B R I G H T E.

Ha,---Buthred!---

B U T H R E D.

Justice has caught, and vengeance lifts the scourge
To lash thy crimes!--Draw back my fellow soldiers,
Heav'n owes him to my hand!--Thy guilt!--Thy
fears,

Mine and my Rena's wrongs, assist my sword.

O S B R I G H T E.

Hold, Buthred!--Pause we on the brink of fate.
My sword is good, my arm as strong as thine;
But my soul seeks another foe.

B U T H R E D.

Again!

Pause, that your minion, Elwin, may have time
To form some base device.--Mean artifice!--

O S B R I G H T E.

Buthred should know me better.--Know his King
Incapable of artifice, or fear
Of human force--I speak from nobler motives:
My soul revolts against the unnatural war
Of Briton against Briton.

Enter Ela.

E L A.

Fly Earl Buthred!

This instant fly, or Rena's lost for ever.
The Danes have seiz'd her, and with brutal rage
Are forcing her away---

M O R C A R.

The Danes, just heav'n,

I see thine hand!

O S B R I G H T E.

Earl Buthred, hear my words.

My sword is your's--a call like this suspends
All private enmity. It is the cause,
The gen'ral cause of honour, and of virtue.

When

When Rena shall be rescu'd from the foe,
If then thy honest pride shall still remain
Unsatisfied, I'll meet you in the instant.

B U T H R E D. *Exit*
Distraction! — hark! — by heav'n her voice —
away — [*Exeunt all but Ela.*

E L A. *Enter*
Where can I hide me? whither shall I fly?
Dangers have heav'n'd me in on every side.
The din grows louder — eve y' horrid clash
Pierces my dying heart. (*Shout*) Protect me heav'n.
Re-enter Osbrighte, *leading in* Rena, *with his sword*
drawn in his hand.

R E N A.
O unexpected woe! — this change of slavery
Heaps ruin upon ruin. With the Dames
I had been safe — their avarice of ransom
Would have protected —

O S B R I G H T E.
Fear not, thou art safe.
No violence that Osbrighte can repeat,
No insult from himself shall wound thy virtue.
This sword, that rescu'd from the savage Dames,
Shall guard thee for thy lord —

Enter Buthred *from the Castle.*

Earl Buthred, here
Receive thy Rena from the hands of Osbrighte.
[*Trumpet at a distance*
That trumpet calls me where the battle rages.
Anon I'll come and answer thy demands. *Exit.*

B U T H R E D.
Can that be Osbrighte? That the midnight ruffian,
The invader of the sacred marriage bed? (*half aside.*
Where did he meet thee?

R E N A.
At the western gate
He stopp'd the ravagers; and with his sword
Opening a passage thro' them, led me hither.
A moment more had given me to their power
Beyond relief.

BUTH.

BUTHERED, *loud cry*
 I fought you in your chamber;
 But heav'n thought meet that he should set you free.
 I see its sacred will and must submit;
 Must leave my vengeance to a mightier hand.

R E N A.

Am I so blest'd---To see my lord in safety---
 To clasp him thus!--But what may yet remain?
 The sun has ris'n but twice, since he beheld
 My lot the happiest on this side heav'n.
 But Oh, the dire reverse!--the interval
 Streck'd to an age by misery, so appall'
 My soul, it sickens at the thought of life.

B U T H R E D.

Fear not my love!--the happiness which virtue
 Earns in the midst of dangers and distress,
 Is firmly founded on a rock, that braves
 The storms of fortune--Grateful for the change,
 We'll ne'er look back but to endear our bliss.

Enter Morcar.

M O R C A R.

Haste, of all's lost, my lord!--your men about
 Look for their leader; while the furious Dane
 Bears all before him---Osbright scarce maintains
 Th' unequal fight.

B U T H R E D.

Haste, Morcar; let a trumpet
 Summon the Dane to parley.

M O R C A R.

'Tis in vain!
 He scoffs at faith!--When Elbert as he enter'd
 Bade him remember that he came your friend,
 And urg'd the treaty--"Yes," he cried, "I'll keep
 "Treaties, when this" waving his sword aloft--
 "Can't cut them through."--Then aim'd a treache-
 rous blow
 That slew him unsuspecting.

B U T H R E D.

Elbert slain!
 Slain by the Danes?--Heav'n struck with Ivar's hand,
 To

To mark the blow more strongly for its own
On whom shall fall the next? *(aside)*

M O R C A R:

My lord the time——

B U T H R E D:

And must I leave my Rena mid these horrors?
What can I do?—Retire, my love, a moment——
Morcar, I leave the treasure of my soul
Safe in your care—I trust her to your virtue——

M O R C A R:

My lord, I see what agonizing pangs
Tear your divided heart, and feel them with you,
Against the world I'd guard her—but the King,
Perhaps this moment overpower'd by numbers,
Looks round for Morcar——

B U T H R E D:

Morcar, you must stay!
I can trust none but you—I'll lead my people;
And take your place beside him—Should I fall—
Be not alarm'd, my love!—I fear no danger.

R E N A:

O my lov'd lord!—wilt thou again desert me?
To fight the battles of a lawless tyrant.
Can glory yield, or honour enquire
A sacrifice like this?

B U T H R E D:

It is not glory;
A voice more powerful calls me to the field—
To save my Rena—love supplanting virtue,
I madly join'd the foe, let loose the rage,
The ravagers of war upon my country;
But heav'n perhaps, in mercy may accept
My weak endeavours to repel that foe,
And heal my country's wounds—O generous Morcar,
Should ought befall me,—to her father's bosom
Restore the sacred charge, in happier days
Intrusted to my love.—Protect her Heav'n! *(Exit)*

R E N A:

Hold thy own shield before him, God of Battles,
And turn aside the sword——

M O R C A R,

A T R A G E D Y.

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M O R C A R.

Lady, retire,
The tumult moves this way—Relentless war
Too often falls with undiscerning rage,
Too often spotless innocence with guilt,
Is swept in one wild ruin.

R E N A.

Ela, come!
Life is still dear to me, if Buthred live—
Ha! if he live?—Oh agonizing doubt,
Would not this frame feel instant dissolution,
If its lov'd lord were snatch'd away?—He said—
Should ought befall me—Could he think I'd live?
The care, that look'd beyond his life to guard me,
Wrong'd my devoted heart. (Morcar moves.) I go—
Oh Buthred!

{Exeunt.

SCENE, A Wood.

Enter Osbrighte, retiring before Ivar.

Just as they are going to renew the fight, a parley is sounded within

Enter Buthred, advancing between them

B U T H R E D.

Hear King of Danes, and thou Northumbria,
I come to sheath the unnecessary sword:
Drawn in the cause of Buthred, and restore
The truce.

I V A R.

Away, I own no truce! nor ever
Will sheath my sword, till sated with the blood
Of Osbrighte and his Britons.

O S B R I G H T E.

(advancing)——Vile Barbarian!——

First feel the vengeance of a British arm——
Thus Osbrighte meets thee.

B U T H R E D.

Hold, King Osbrighte, hold!
Restrain your wrath a moment—Hear me, Ivar.
Call'd by the rashness of officious zeal,
You came my friend profess'd; and pledg'd your oath
To stop the rage of war at my demand——

I claim

I claim the faith of treaty, —Reverence
The gods you worship, before whom you swore,
And draw your forces off.

I V A R.

Dare they claim faith,
Who have broke allegiance? —Blindness! not to know
My league with Butfred was against himself,
As much as Osbrighte; —against every man
Who bears the name of Briton! —When a foe
In civil discord takes the weaker part
'Tis but to ruin both —to keep alive
The unnatural struggle, 'till it wastes their force,
And leaves them a defenceless prey to foes,
Their weakness took for friends. —But I waste time!
The sacred raven shakes his wings, and croaks
With joy, at scent of British blood.

(Trumpets at a distance.)

B U T H R E D.

He comes!

I've partly'd well. —Now perfidy receive
Thy just reward. —My liege, these trumpets tell
Edgar's arrival with the force of Deira —
Justly distrusting Danish faith, I sent
To summon his approach.

I V A R.

Curst be thy caution!
Thy busy zeal, has marr'd my enterprize;
I thought the sense of private injuries
Dissolv'd all public ties —But break we off —
Rollo, draw up your force on yonder green!
Our men will there have room, if these base Britons
Dare face our fury. *(Exeunt Ivar and Danes.)*

O S B R I G H T E.

Ha! —By Heav'n they fly! —
Come on my friends! —They shan't escape us so! —
(Exeunt Osbrighte, Butfred &c. in pursuit)

Alarms — Scene changes to the Court — Flourish.

Enter Osbrighte, Butfred, and Soldiers

O S B R I G H T E.

How suddenly they vanish'd! —Ravagers
Are never bold, but when they can surprise

A T R A G E D Y. 71

Here, and away—They're like the whirlwind's blast,
Seen only in the act of desolation.

B U T H R E D

The shaft of vengeance will overtake their flight.
Edgar is in pursuit—his force already
Like the west wind, has swept into the sea
Those locusts spread upon the coast of Deira,
Destroying all that might escape their rapine.

Enter Elwin led in wounded.

E L W I N. *(sappor'd.)*

O help me,---Lead me to my sovereign's feet!--
You bade me seek a fate, and I have found it.
Earl Buthred too!--Thank Heav'n the shades of death
Will hide me soon.--O can my liege forgive--
Bend me yet further back--One moment, heav'n--
Spare me a moment--Can my liege forgive
The base abuser of his confidence?
Will Buthred's pardon give my trembling soul
One ray of hope!--*(dies.)*

B U T H R E D.

Heaven's mercy reach us all.

Enter Morear, Rena, and Ela.

M O R C A R.

Earl Buthred, I restore your lovely charge--
Auspicious be the moment!--Never more
May any storm divide, to make our meeting
So painfully extatic--

B U T H R E D

Not more gladly

Did our first father, from his maker's hand,
Receive in all the bloom of new creation
The blushing mate, beneficently given,
make compleat the bliss of Paradise.

R E N A.

Nor with more grateful reverence and joy
Did she embrace the Lord of her existence,
Whose charms she but reflected--In whose bliss,
The end of her creation, she was blest'd.

O S B R I G H T E.

Could I disturb such harmony of soul?
Or think to break an union seal'd in Heav'n?

Morcar call forth your men, we'll join Earl Edgar,
 And strengthen his pursuit.---The savage Dane
 Shall rue his menaces if I o'ertake him.---
 And now, Earl Butfred, here I stand to answer,
 As man to man, whatever claim your honour
 Shall make upon me: That I've wrong'd thee, Butfred
 My soul feels shame and sorrow-----

B U T H R E D.

Gracious Osbrighte!--

My wrongs are done away: My impious arm,
 Rais'd in the daring phrenzy of revenge
 Against my sovereign, cancels ev'ry wrong
 Done to a subject; as your generous rescue
 Of Rena from the brutal violence,
 Drawn on her by my rashness, stills the voice
 Of her complaints-----

O S B R I G H T E.

A duty to myself!-----

A debt which ev'ry base man owes the sex,
 Could badly expiate such sacrilege.
 Tho' when you know by what insidious arts
 My unsuspecting heart was practis'd on,
 It may extenuate somewhat-----

B U T H R E D.

In his blood,

Who caus'd the offence---Be the remembrance of it,
 For ever wash'd away.---Will Osbrighte pardon---

O S B R I G H T E.

Can my friend forget---(they embrace.)

M O R C A R.

There died perfidious Denmark's blasted hope.
 While Britons are unanimous, they scorn
 The world in arms.---If e'er in future days,
 Heav'n in its wrath should let the unhallow'd sword
 Of civil discord be unsheath'd again,
 Thus may its wounds be heal'd; the sacred bond
 Of union tied more firmly, and their vengeance
 Pour'd with redoubled force upon the foe
 Who sought their ruin in the mask of friendship.

T H E E N D.

